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25X1

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13 January 1967

25X1

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CONTENTS

Vietnam: Current situation report. (Page 1)

Communist China: Reorganization of army purge group suggests that political loyalty of army is divided. (Page 2)

Israel-Syria: Israelis ready to retaliate should Syrians provoke them. (Page 3)

Togo: Coup announced

25X1

*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: The first draft of the constitution has been circulated to the Constituent Assembly deputies who have recessed until 16 January to study it in detail.

The most controversial provision of the draft constitution may prove to be its final chapter, which, in addition to empowering the assembly to establish electoral procedures for the executive and legislative branches, authorizes the assembly to serve as an interim legislature until a permanent legislature is elected.

There has thus far been no official Directorate reaction to the assembly's attempt to prolong its life and broaden its powers, but alternative measures for setting up the necessary electoral machinery are reportedly under consideration by the military leaders.

25X1

13 Jan 67

1

Communist China: The reorganization on 11 January of the army's Cultural Revolution Group--the organization responsible for purging the army of opponents of Mao and Lin--is additional evidence that the army's political loyalties may be divided.

According to the New China News Agency's announcement of the reorganization, the new head of the group is Hsu Hsiang-chien, a politburo member who also serves on the party's key Military Affairs Commission. Madame Mao is now an adviser of the purge group. The man who apparently had previously headed the group, Liu Chih-chien, was denounced in Red Guard posters a few days ago as a follower of the disgraced Chief of State Liu Shao-chi and party general secretary Teng Hsiao-ping.

An editorial in the Liberation Army Journal on 12 January said that the new group would "open ferocious fire on the handful of persons in authority within the army who take the capitalist road." Such allusions in the Peking press to the existence of unreliable military leaders are rare.

The army journal reaffirmed the assertion made by People's Daily and Red Flag on 11 January that the cultural revolution has been "pushed" to a new stage by recent events. Reminding its readers that the army is "the mainstay of the proletarian dictatorship"--that is, the regime's chief instrument of domestic control--the army journal went on to declare that the army was the "defender" of the cultural revolution. In light of the new efforts to purge the army and make it a more trustworthy instrument, this statement could be intended as a threat that Mao and Lin will use the armed forces against some of their more powerful, entrenched opponents in the party machinery if necessary. Thus far, neither side has attempted to use military force extensively to resolve the political struggle.

25X1

13 Jan 67

2

Israel-Syria: Israel is ready to retaliate against Syria should it decide to do so.

The Israelis have strengthened their forces along the Syrian border during the past few days and, in the opinion of the US defense attache in Tel Aviv, now have sufficient equipment in position to launch either a limited ground attack or a joint ground-air strike. In addition, they have other forces there to defend the border.

25X1

13 Jan 67

3

25X1

Approved For Release 2003/04/18 : CIA-RDP79T00975A009500260001-8

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Approved For Release 2003/04/18 : CIA-RDP79T00975A009500260001-8

NOTE

*Togo: In Lome this morning, Army Chief of Staff Etienne Eyadema announced that the army has taken over civil and military power, suspended the constitution, dissolved the assembly and prohibited all political activity. Eyadema said that his new government, which takes over on the fourth anniversary of the ouster of former President Olympio, plans to set up a "reconciliation committee" and to hold national elections in three months. However, Eyadema is under pressure from various elements, probably including better trained junior officers in the army and diverse civilian factions, and it is not clear what kind of leadership will emerge.

25X1

13 Jan 67

5

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